

CHARLES DICKENS' BIRTHDAY AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only." Opening paragraph of A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens written in 1859... but it could have been written today.....

This week is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens who has many links with our County.

From the Cambridgeshire Collection:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/local_history/cambs/

Charles Dickens came up to Cambridge three times to give public readings of his work.

18th October 1859 when there was almost word for word coverage in the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press newspapers.

28th March 1867 and finally in 18th March 1869 as part of his farewell tour.

Two published Cambridge diaries from the period mention them: Josiah Chater refers to the visit in 1867 and says "we did not go" in 1869 he says "to hear Charles Dickens, who gave some readings ... from Martin Chuzzlewit and Holly Tree Inn. I liked it very much"

Joseph Romilly, who often mentions in his diary that he is reading Dickens - 2 March 1850 "Read loud the new Novel of Copperfield - the blissful day with Dora is very comic"

He went to the 1859 reading "The room was quite full and Dickens was received enthusiastically. I had never seen him before: he has great power of changing the expression of his countenance: I preferred him in the pathetic parts. He amused me by prefacing his reading with saying he had no objection to the audience expressing the feelings which different parts of the reading might excite ..."

The plays of the books were also fairly quick to appear. Christmas Carol.tif
Wisbech and Fenland Museum own the original manuscript of
GreatExpectations:http://www.wisbechmuseum.org.uk/virtualtour_libraries.htm

And this week Cambridge University unveiled a letter from Charles Dickens to his son Henry nearly 150 years ago. Dickens' son, Henry, then just 19 and the first of the writer's 10 children to go to university, had just arrived at Trinity Hall in Cambridge, to study maths:

:<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Home/Cambridge-University-unveils-letter-from-Charles-Dickens-to-his-son-06022012.htm>

You can borrow A Tale of Two Cities and any of Charles Dickens' novels from Cambridgeshire Libraries: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/>

FREE CYCLE SAFETY TRAINING FOR THOUSANDS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE YOUNGSTERS

A bid for government funding and reductions in spending elsewhere will mean that thousands of Cambridgeshire youngsters will get free cycle safety training thanks to the County Council.

The spending savings which have resulted in an extra £10,000 boost from the County Council budget and the grant from DfT will see 4,000 training places during 2012/13, 4,500 the next year and 5,000 the following year - a total of 13,500 youngsters who will receive the training in primary schools at no cost - currently the training costs £15 a head.

The Bikeability training grant bid of £540,000 will be used by the County Council to provide the road safety education sessions which will be delivered in partnership with School Games Organiser Host Schools (formally known as School Sports Partnerships).

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds, said: "We currently charge for cycle training, but following a wider review of the road safety budget where we have made some spending saving by cutting overheads and with the support from DfT, from the start of the next academic year we will be able to scrap the charge and provide this important road safety advice to youngsters at no cost."

During the last 12 months for which figures are available, 355 pedal cycle casualties were reported on Cambridgeshire's roads. Cambridgeshire County Council pioneered on-road practical cycle training for 10/11 year olds, during the late 1970s, which eventually became the benchmark for all such schemes nationally. Since then the County has trained thousands of children every year.

The County Council will receive a Bikeability payment retrospectively from DfT for every young person who undergoes the training and the free training sessions will be introduced from the beginning of the next academic year.

HEAVY COMMERCIAL VEHICLE (HCV) STRATEGY

A new Strategy for managing HCVs, which was consulted upon last year, was approved by Cabinet in January. I would like to thank all those parishes that contributed during the consultation process.

The Strategy's escalation process and assessment methodology will be used to facilitate joint working with local communities to determine how best to manage their HCV issues.

The new Strategy recognises the economic importance of road haulage and the need to balance this with the environmental impact of lorries on local communities. It sets out a range of interventions to mitigate lorry impacts and stresses that formal regulation should be considered the final and not the first option.

At present, we are working on ways of making the process easier for communities to understand and use through the provision of guides and online tools. We will contact you again in the near future when this work has been completed, to offer help and support to those who wish to consider the need for measures to address HCV problems.

The Cabinet report and decision is available here:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=380>

LOVE YOUR LIBRARY ON 4 FEBRUARY

Libraries across the UK have been celebrating National Libraries Day on 4 February. In Cambridgeshire, libraries have been encouraging existing borrowers to bring along a friend, relative, neighbour or colleague to their local library. They'll be encouraged to join up as a member and borrow some books, magazines, DVDs or audio books, use the computers and just have a browse of everything that's on offer.

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds said "National Libraries Day has been another great reason to visit the library that you love. We're encouraging Cambridgeshire residents to take time to take someone who is not currently a member along to their local library and show them just what they've been missing.

National Libraries Day is a celebration of the work done in school, college, university, workplace and public libraries to promote learning, literacy and the enjoyment of reading to all. It is supported by a range of twenty-five organisations including the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the Reading Agency, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, library campaigners and publishers.

COUNCILS BACK BUSINESSES AFTER GROUP SAYS THEY SHOULD PAY TO PARK

Proposals to make businesses across the whole of Cambridgeshire pay to park at their own company to try to reduce traffic on the A14 has been criticised by councillors. Council chiefs say proposals being put forward by the Campaign for Better Transport would harm business and penalise companies who never go near the A14.

The proposal was made as part of the campaign group's submission to the A14 challenge which is looking at ways of improving the route. Councils agree with some of the suggestions, which are already in motion, such as reducing freight on the A14 by improving the rail links. But council chiefs from Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council fear work place charging would set back the economy not grow it. Cambridgeshire is recognised as an area which could help drive the national economy and councils are working hard to support companies and make sure the area is open for business.

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Ian Bates, Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning, said: "The idea of putting a blanket work place levy across the whole of Cambridgeshire would harm the economy at a time when we should be doing all we can to support business. Why should a local company in Wisbech whose business comes nowhere near the A14 see their staff having to pay to park? Some of the ideas have merit but we must do all we can to make sure the message is loud and clear – Cambridgeshire is open for business. That is why we are investing heavily in broadband and transport projects such as Chesterton Station and Ely Southern by-pass to help grow the economy."

Cllr Nick Wright, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "We need to find solutions to the current problem on the A14 that gets traffic moving, but a stealth tax on businesses is simply not the way to do this. Many rural firms in South Cambridgeshire do not use the A14 and this would be a bitter blow for them, especially at a time when our focus is on helping them through the national downturn and creating new jobs."

Councils have been working hard together to make sure Government takes seriously the issue of improving the A14 and will be submitting their own joint proposals.

The responses to the A14 Challenge will be considered by the Department for Transport.

NEED HELP OR ADVICE WITH DAILY LIVING? – JUST AskSARA!

A website offering help and advice to people with a range of day-to-day needs is now available with information localised for people living in Cambridgeshire.

AskSARA is a self help guide that enables people to identify equipment that may help them in their daily lives, including information on manufacturers and local suppliers.

Cambridgeshire's version is being promoted as a flagship for providing local information by the Disabled Living Foundation.

AskSARA takes users through a set of guided questions leading to general advice and recommendations on what equipment would be suitable to meet their particular needs.

It provides information on local sources of equipment including retail outlets, mail order and demonstration centres. People receive a review of the recommended equipment before they buy. This allows them to compare and make informed choices about which equipment will best meet their needs.

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds, said: "AskSARA is very user friendly and widely accessible regardless of people's age or ability. Information is provided in jargon free, plain English that can be easily understood without the need for professional supervision.

"The Disabled Living Foundation, who host the AskSARA website, intend to promote Cambridgeshire as their flagship site for offering a local solution to people's need for equipment. This is a reflection of the hard work put in by social care staff in Cambridgeshire to ensure the information people get is useful and reflects what is actually available locally."

AskSARA went live on February 1.

Access is via the pages offering advice about equipment on Cambridgeshire's adult social care website Your Life, Your Choice www.yourlifeyourchoice.org.uk or go straight to AskSARA at: <http://www.asksara.org.uk/?auth=cambridgeshire>

The AskSARA services builds on the help, advice and support which is already provided by social care and health services in Cambridgeshire

KEEP WARM AND WELL ADVICE AS WINTER WEATHER RETURNS

With a prolonged spell of very cold weather predicted, agencies across Cambridgeshire are working together to help people in the county stay safe, warm and well as the winter weather hits. Health services, road safety experts and care support services are sharing information, expertise and support to ensure that a comprehensive range of services is available to vulnerable residents, when they need it most.

Gritting and treating a wide network of highways, footpaths and cycleways, working with district and parish councils to grit community areas such as paths outside shops, community centres and doctors surgeries and schemes designed to cut drink driving and raise accident awareness among drivers will help to reduce hospital admissions and trips to GP surgeries or A & E as well as keep people safe. The local NHS will be working with District Councils and with voluntary sector agencies such as Age UK to provide advice on how to keep warm and well over winter, as well as encouraging vulnerable people to take up flu vaccinations, and avoid slips and trips.

Cambridgeshire Director of Public Health, Dr Liz Robin, said: "I would encourage everyone who is eligible for a free seasonal flu jab this winter to take up the opportunity to protect their health.

This includes

- * All pregnant women irrespective of their stage of pregnancy.

- * Adults and children who suffer from:

- Chronic respiratory disease such as asthma, emphysema, cystic fibrosis
- Heart disease - Diabetes
- Kidney or liver disease
- Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment
- Chronic neurological disease such as stroke/transient ischaemic attack (TIA) Multiple Sclerosis.

- * All people aged 65 and over

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds, is calling on people to help public agencies care for the vulnerable in the community by becoming good neighbours.

His call is in support of a new countywide Help at Home service, provided by the Cambridgeshire Care Network Charity and funded by the County Council and NHS Cambridgeshire.

He said: "The new Help at Home scheme is an excellent way to ensure that those vulnerable people in our community get the help they often need, but are reluctant or unable to ask for.

"What I am asking people to do is not to become nosy neighbours, but concerned neighbours who gently keep an eye on people living nearby who may benefit from the new service and the other advice and support provided by agencies across Cambridgeshire including health and social care services. By working even more closely together, health, welfare and safety agencies across Cambridgeshire, can do even more than in previous years to support our communities and I am asking local people to help us to help those who need us by becoming a 'good neighbour.'

For more information on the Help at Home service, contact (01223) 714433 or visit www.care-network.org.uk - for health and social care services go to <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/>

SHUTTING THE DOOR ON ROGUE TRADERS

At Trading Standards we frequently come across residents who have agreed to have work carried out on their home or garden by someone who has called at their door, only to be charged extortionate amounts of money.

The trader will often say you have a loose roof tile that needs fixing, which then turns into a much larger job, resulting in a bill for several thousand pounds. In all cases we find that either the trader hasn't actually done any work because it never needed doing, or that the work has been done so badly it needs re-doing by a professional.

Another common tactic is to say they have tarmac left over from some road resurfacing work or they are tarmacking a neighbour's drive in the street and can give you a discounted price if you have yours done – again charging an extortionate price and carrying out poor work that later needs re-doing by a professional. Other common areas of work they offer to do are tree felling, gardening, re-pointing, guttering, fascias and soffits.

In every case the trader will seem very charming when they call at your door, and in most cases will tell you the work needs doing that day to prevent further damage, leaving you with no time to get a second opinion. It is for this reason that these rogue traders can trick anybody - even lifetime scholars and retired engineers.

We want you to avoid such problems, so below we offer a few tips:

- If someone calls at your door offering to do work, politely decline. If they claim certain work needs doing, contact a trader you know you can trust to get their professional opinion. Most traders will visit you very quickly if you are concerned the work needs doing urgently.
- You will shortly be able to find a 'Trading Standards approved' trader on the new Buy with Confidence Scheme, launching on 19th March 2012. We will run checks on every trader before letting them join to make sure they are safe and reliable for you to use. To find a trader on the Scheme visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk. If you do not have access to the Internet you will be able to ask your local library to look up traders on the scheme for you, or telephone our partner advice line on 0845 4040506 to be given details of Buy with Confidence traders suitable for your needs.
- It is still advisable to get three quotes so that you know the price you are paying is reasonable, and always get quotes in writing, making sure they set out exactly what you will receive for that price.
- If you agree to a contract in your home and it is for over £35, you will almost certainly be entitled to a 7 day cancellation period and notice of this should be given to you in writing before the work begins.
- To discourage traders from calling at your door in the first place, we can provide you with a free 'We're not buying it' sticker for your front door. Call our partner advice line on 0845 4040506 to request one.

If you or someone you know has been affected by a rogue trader, don't be afraid to come forward. You can speak to us in confidence for advice and support.

Contact our partner advice line on 0845 4040506 and they will pass your details through to us so that we can contact you.

Both the Police and Trading Standards are committed to catching rogue traders and bringing them to justice.

If you believe a rogue trader is currently at your property or in your neighbourhood, please contact the police on 999.

The Olympics 2012 – a great opportunity to celebrate and get involved in Cambridgeshire

For the sporting....

As Olympic fever spreads across the country, many of us might feel inclined to get involved in some new sporting activities, whether in a competitive manner or just for a bit of fun.

Numerous events are going on nationally – the Big Dance Week in July, the ‘Gold Challenge’ where you can raise money for charity by trying 5, 10, 20 or 30 Olympic and Paralympic sports, ‘Hopscotch to Victory’ which is a world record attempt taking place in June, and for those who fancy something a little less strenuous, there is ‘All the Bells’ which calls on residents to ring any kind of bell they can between 8am and 8.03am on 27th July. More information about these activities and many more can be found on the main Olympic and Paralympic website www.london2012.com. If you do not have access to the internet and would like to find out more about the national activities, telephone 0845 2672012.

There will also be many sporting events and activities taking place locally. These will be listed on www.livingsport.co.uk or you can contact LIVING SPORT on 01487 841559. Events will also be added to the www.cambridgeshire.net website as they are announced. If you have an event planned that you would like to publicise, it can be added to this website. If you have a disability, you can find out what activities you can get involved in locally at www.abilityplusgroup.co.uk, by calling the Ability PLUS Group on 01487 849929 or by contacting your local District Council.

For the not so sporting....

The Olympics also bring people together and are a reason to celebrate. Large events will be taking place across the county along the Olympic Torch route as it passes through Peterborough on 3rd July, Cambridge (as part of the Big Weekend on Parker’s Piece) on 7th and 8th July and St Ives and Huntingdon on 8th July. Route details and times will be announced by London 2012 nearer the time.

Local people are also being encouraged to organise their own celebrations and the **2012 Local Leaders** initiative has been set up to help you do just that. By signing up, you will receive information on a range of themed celebration ideas and be in the front row to receive free London 2012 event materials. You can find out more at www.london2012.com/get-involved or by telephoning 0845 2672012.

The County Council is keen to encourage local events and street parties, and has added simple guidance to getting a street party road closure on their website

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/trafficmanagement/events/ontheroad/street_parties.htm. If you don’t have internet access, you can call 01223 507176 to arrange this or to discuss any other events that you would like to organise.

Cultural events will also be taking place, including the UK’s biggest ever cultural festival and the ‘Walk the World’ campaign which encourages residents to join the race to find local connections to all 206 nations taking part in the Olympics (see www.walktheworld.org.uk). Information on local cultural events will also be available on www.cambridgeshire.net as they are announced.

And finally, if you have been inspired by the 70,000 people who have registered as Olympic and Paralympic volunteers, you can sign up to volunteer at local events at www.volunteeringcambsandpboro.org.uk.